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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMED CASC KSCA SENV TBIO PREL KU

SUBJECT: FORMATION OF JOINT STATE-DOD AVIAN INFLUENZA
WORKING GROUP

REF: A. KUWAIT 4516

B. KUWAIT 4673

C. KUWAIT 4755

11. (U) SUMMARY Embassy convened a new committee of Emboffs and military officers at the working level to coordinate USG efforts in Kuwait in preparation for a possible Avian Influenza (AI) outbreak. The group discussed information provided by the GOK about its preparations, internal Embassy plans and tripwires, and U.S. military plans as they are developing. The group will meet every two weeks. END SUMMARY

12. (U) On November 16 and 29, a new working group consisting of Econcouns, ESTHoff, Medoff, and Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) medical, veterinary, and logistical officers met to coordinate USG preparations for a possible AI outbreak in Kuwait. The group numbers 11 persons. Emboffs and Miloffs exchanged contact information, and agreed to clear all information for the GOK or release to the public through the Embassy, with ESTHoff designated as the POC.

13. (U) Emboffs shared information and recent reporting cables detailing GOK plans and preparations for AI, and provided a copy of the recently-finalized tripwires (ref c). CFLCC officers stated that U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) is still in the process of drafting its own comprehensive plan, which will be based on World Health Organization recommendations, and will provide a copy of it to Emboffs upon its completion.

14. (SBU) ESTHoff stressed the need to coordinate the USG message to the GOK in order to maintain its confidence that the USG tracks the GOK's plans (refs a & b) and is itself adequately prepared for any outbreak. On this point, one military medical officer noted that, in addition to roughly 20,000 uniformed soldiers, there are nearly 40,000 badged contractors (and an unknown total of subcontractors) under the broader U.S. military umbrella in Kuwait. He continued that he thought it possible that the GOK might expect the USG to provide health care, quarantine, et cetera, for these contractors, despite their nominal access to the Kuwait public health system.

15. (SBU) This opinion was seconded by other officers who explained that since the contracting companies are obligated to provide for their employees' healthcare, the GOK certainly would expect the USG to enforce those contract provisions, at a minimum. They also stated that the CENTCOM plan therefore would likely address contractors to some degree. All agreed that sharing at least the parameters of the CENTCOM plan with the GOK could prove beneficial and ease any fear of AI being spread by USG workers/contractors. However, the officers were clear to state that the U.S. military in Kuwait does not have immediately at hand the resources to quarantine or care for all of the contractors found under its umbrella.

16. (U) The next meeting is scheduled for December 14, and semimonthly thereafter unless events dictate more frequent meetings.

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